

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Point of Rocks

other names/site number _____ DHR File Number 020-0123

2. Location

street & number 1005 Point of Rocks Road _____ not for publication

city or town Chester _____ X vicinity
state Virginia code VA county Chesterfield code 041 Zip 23836

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this x nomination _____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property x meets _____ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant _____ nationally _____ statewide x locally. (_____ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official _____ Date

Virginia Department of Historic Resources

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property _____ meets _____ does not meet the National Register criteria. (_____ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

_____ entered in the National Register

_____ See continuation sheet.

_____ determined eligible for the

National Register

_____ See continuation sheet.

_____ determined not eligible for the National Register

_____ removed from the National Register

_____ other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper _____

Date of Action _____

U. S. Department of the Interior
National Park ServicePoint of Rocks
Chesterfield County, VA

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private
☐ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- ☒ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u> 1 </u>	<u> 1 </u> buildings
<u> 1 </u>	<u> 0 </u> sites
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 0 </u> structures
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 0 </u> objects
<u> 2 </u>	<u> 1 </u> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

 N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u> Domestic </u>	Sub: <u> Single Dwelling </u>
<u> Landscape </u>	<u> Natural Feature </u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u> Domestic </u>	Sub: <u> Single Dwelling </u>
<u> Domestic </u>	<u> Secondary Structure </u>
<u> Landscape </u>	<u> Natural Feature </u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)☐ Greek Revival _____

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)foundation ☐ Stone _____roof ☐ Metal _____walls ☐ Wood Weatherboard _____

other _____

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- ☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or a grave.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property.
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)☐ Architecture _____☐ Military _____

U. S. Department of the Interior
National Park ServicePoint of Rocks
Chesterfield County, VA

Period of Significance _ca. 1840-1938 _____

Significant Dates _ca. 1840; 1864 _____

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation _____

Architect/Builder _Strachan, John Alexander _____
_Cox, Thomas Blackwood _____

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Name of repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property __10_____

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing	Zone Easting Northing
1 _____	2 _____
3 _____	4 _____
____ See continuation sheet.	

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

U. S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Point of Rocks
Chesterfield County, VA

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Crystal C. MonroeOrganization: _____ date August 30, 2004street & number: 2205 Mount Blanco Road telephone _____city or town Chester state VA zip code 23836

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets**Maps**

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name _____

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Point of Rocks
Chesterfield County, VA

Section 7 Page 1

7. Summary Description:

Point of Rocks, in eastern Chesterfield County, Virginia, takes its name from a nearby 60-foot high sandstone cliff projecting into the Port Walthall Channel of the Appomattox River. The rock formation sits about 200 yards in front of the house known as Point of Rocks. The house is a one-story, three-bay dwelling with weatherboard siding and a low-pitched hipped standing seam metal roof. The double-pile dwelling has a modified center-hall plan with four equal-size rooms. Two large chimneys serve four fireplaces. A small one-bay gable-roofed tetra-style porch, centered on the front of the house, appears to be the original. Now enclosed with screen, it features square Greek posts with molded capitals and double-denticulated entablature. The house was built circa 1840 by the Reverend John Alexander Strachan. According to the late architectural historian, Jeffrey M. O'Dell in *Chesterfield County Historic Sites and Structures*, his survey of the county's architectural resources, the house is architecturally unique in Chesterfield County.

Detailed Description

The house at Point of Rocks is a one-story, three-bay frame house set on a stuccoed stone foundation. It has a low-pitched hipped roof with two interior chimneys. The original section of the house has a double-pile, modified center-hall plan with four equal-size rooms. The original rectangular floor plan measured approximately 48' by 32' with an open porch measuring approximately 15' x 17', centered on the front façade. The front porch appears to be an original feature and is tetrastyle, one bay wide with a gable roof.

The house was constructed using rough-sawn 8" x 12" timbers. The structure was covered with weatherboard siding and sits on its original 20-inch-thick stuccoed stone foundation. The molding around windows and doors, along with their hardware, support the antebellum date. The roof is a shallow hipped standing-seam metal roof that is painted. The porch has a gable roof supported by Greek square posts with hand-hewn dentil cornice and fascia boards. There are two interior chimneys constructed of handmade bricks serving four fireplaces.

The original interior walls were constructed of horsehair plaster over lathe. The majority of the original plaster still exists and has seen only limited repair. The original floors were of heart pine. Most of the original floors also still remain and have had only limited repairs.

Section 7, 8 Page 2

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

**Point of Rocks
Chesterfield County, VA**

The house contains some eleven windows. All single windows are six-over-six double-hung sash, while all paired windows are four-over-four double-hung sash. Most of the remaining interior trim is original and includes four-panel, recessed-panel doors that were painted and wood grained with post-Greek cyma moldings. Other interior trim includes wide architrave surrounds also with the same post-Greek cyma moldings, plain Greek mantels with pilasters and 11-inch baseboards, painted black. Ceilings are 9' 8" in height.

The present house was added onto and a garage was constructed in 1938. The garage is a frame building with two large openings, one open and one with double doors. It has a standing seam side gable roof. The garage is a contributing building.

Between 1938 and 1943 some mechanical systems were modernized and an interior bath and running water were brought to the house. Prior to this time, water was pumped by hand up a steep hill, and, at times, had to be hauled by pail to the house. The interior bath was constructed by closing off a rear door and enclosing part of the hall sometime between 1938 and 1943. In 1938 a small but functional kitchen with breakfast nook was added to the rear of the house, however, plumbing was not added until later, sometime before 1943. The exterior kitchen, slave quarters and other storage buildings were in disrepair and were torn down in 1938.

Point of Rocks remains snuggled in a rural setting with many of its natural rock cliffs remaining. These rock cliffs still provide a panoramic view of the Appomattox River today.

8. Statement of Significance

Summary Statement of Significance

The house at Point of Rocks stands overlooking the 60-foot high rock cliffs, from which the property received its name. These elevated rock cliffs stand overlooking the Appomattox River some three miles west of its junction with the James River. The rock cliffs have been known since early days. Tradition holds that Indians used them as camping areas or points for observation and caves at the foot of the cliffs along the riverbank may have also provided shelter. The house known as Point of Rocks dates to ca. 1840 and is a well preserved example of a unique house type, a one-story dwelling on a stone foundation. It retains good integrity. The house differs from other plantation houses of the period because it lacks a raised basement. The property served as an excellent observation point

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

**Point of Rocks
Chesterfield County, VA**

during the Civil War for the Union Army's General Benjamin F. Butler and also was the site of a hospital constructed for Union troops. The house was used a quarters for the surgeons.

Criteria Statement

Point of Rocks is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C. As the location of a Union military headquarters and hospital in 1864 during the Civil War, Point of Rocks is associated with the x campaign fought during the later years of the war. The house is also an unusual Greek Revival house type for Chesterfield County and possesses good integrity.

Historical Background

Although Point of Rocks has a long documented history, there is unwritten word passed down through the years that the Woodland Period Indians utilized this land, traveling through it and using the high point for camping and for observation of the Appomattox River. There is a cave, often referred to locally as the "Indian Cave," at the base of the bluff along the river bank. This cave is now much smaller in diameter than it once was. Members of the current owner's family, ventured into it, only to hear running water and proceeded no further.

Abraham Wood established a trading post at this site as part of a 700-acre tract in 1642. Thomas Chamberlayne, his son-in-law, inherited the property, which later passed to his heirs, the Stratton and Batte families. They became long-term owners. In 1813, Jane H. Stratton and Dr. Alexander Glas Strachan married and moved to the Point of Rocks property, residing in a brick house that no longer stands. Their son, John Alexander Strachan, built the house now standing on the property ca. 1840. His daughter, Ada Rebecca, married Oliver Wade Cox, and their descendants still own the property.

Point of Rocks is located just west of Bermuda Hundred peninsula. The peninsula narrows and resembles the neck of a bottle with the area to the west of the tip of the peninsula forming the bottle. This description for the area as a bottleneck was used frequently during the Civil War. Situated, as it is, north of Petersburg, on the opposite side of the Appomattox River, the Bermuda Hundred peninsula was the scene of much activity during the Civil War. Petersburg, with four railroads bringing supplies from the south converging into one line, was an object of Union military attention as early as 1862. Prior to Union occupation of the Point of Rocks area, a Confederate signal station was located there.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

**Point of Rocks
Chesterfield County, VA**

The memoirs of Private B. W. Jones, published in 1902, recount an episode where a small band of Confederates at Point of Rocks repulsed the Union Army three years before the siege of Petersburg. The elevated location of Point of Rocks provided a logical point for a signal station or observation tower. The clearest accounts of this action were printed under the *Stars and Bars: A history of the Surry Light Artillery, Reflections of a Private Solider in the War Between the States*. The Everett Waddy Company privately printed this account in Richmond in 1902. This event may have preserved the Confederacy from an earlier destruction.

An account recorded June 28, 1862 was written by B. W. Jones. He recounts that on June 26th as a roll call was being taken, a boom of a cannon was heard downriver, and a shell came whizzing through the camp signaling the approach of the Union Army on Point of Rocks. There were other rounds of fire which apparently tried to uncover where Confederate troops might be hiding. There were about 60 Confederate troops at Point of Rocks, concealed behind the large boulders on the bluff. The leading Union gunboat was some 50 yards from the Confederate position when they were halted by Confederate fire. The fall of darkness and the elevated position of the Confederate troops prevented their defeat. Confederate reinforcements under the command of J. T. West took up a position behind the large boulders on this bluff. They poured minie balls into the gunboats' portholes when they opened. The infantry remained sheltered by the "masses of rock that lie around on either side of the Point." The battle lasted for over two hours. In the course of this battle a lucky shot made a leak in the hull of one of the boats "that obliged them to run the craft aground," to keep it from sinking in deep water. The Union troops took off their valuables and then burned and abandoned the boat. The natural bluffs at Point of Rocks checked the Union troops from furthering an advance on the City of Petersburg early in the war.

In May of 1864 General Benjamin F. Butler brought the Army of the James, some 40,000 strong, up the James River from Yorktown and Gloucester Point to City Point (now within the City of Hopewell) and Bermuda Hundred. A large camp was established there that extended along the north side of the Appomattox and east of the residence.

Butler took possession of the house at Point of Rocks after the Strachan family abandoned it, fleeing for their safety and refugeeing at Locust Grove about five miles from Chesterfield Courthouse. General Butler established a field hospital on the property north of the house where wounded

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

**Point of Rocks
Chesterfield County, VA**

soldiers from the fighting at Drewry's Bluff and other actions were brought. Surgeons and attendants used the dwelling as their quarters. Since this area was elevated, General Butler erected an observation tower – or built onto the former Confederate signal station - between the house and the river.

There were several unsuccessful movements toward Petersburg with fighting at Port Walthall Junction and Chester Station, Fort Clifton, Ware Bottom Church, Branders Bridge and Swift Creek as Union troops destroyed parts of the railroad. The Army of the James made attempts to break through the Confederate defenses at Drewry's Bluff between May 12 and 16 in hopes of moving toward Richmond, but they were forced back and returned to the line of defenses constructed earlier in the month between Ashton Creek and the James River. From then on the Bermuda Hundred front declined in importance. Many of the troops encamped there eventually were sent to join General Grant at Cold Harbor in late May and then participated in assaults on Petersburg. From about September of 1863 until June 2, 1865 when Confederate lines were abandoned the Bermuda Hundred front was quiet.

Following the war, Point of Rocks was used as a freedmen's village. General Butler described the property in a July 12, 1865 letter to Major General O.O. Howard, commander of Freedmen's Affairs. Butler writes "I caused a very substantial hospital to be built at Point of Rocks, near Bermuda Hundreds, on the peninsular between the Appomattox and the James, of logs, composed of many buildings, with the design that after the capture of Richmond the structures should be used as a freedmen's village..." He concludes, "It should not be permitted to go back into the hands of the former disloyal owner, because, among other reasons, hundreds of our soldiers' graves are in the cemetery near it."

A letter from John A. Strachan to General Howard, dated June 22, 1865 includes "a statement of facts in regard to my farm" and submits "my petition for the restoration of my land...known as 'Point of Rocks.'" Strachan writes that he has "done nothing during the rebellion that was in any way detrimental to the Federal Government." He also mentions that he has taken both the oath of allegiance and the amnesty oath and suggests that there is nothing about his property that makes it particularly well suited for a freedmen's camp. He notes that there are other parties are willing to sell land in the same locality, if the government insists on having such a camp in the area. He then launches into a poignant plea for the return of his property:

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

**Point of Rocks
Chesterfield County, VA**

This land is my homestead, the place of my birth and a life time residence and, has attractions for me which could not render it particularly advantageous for a freeman's camp. I have nothing left me now but my land, all my other property have been destroyed, even including my wearing apparel and I am the husband of a delicate wife and the father of several children. I most respectfully ask that my land may be at once restored to me by your order.

Strachan's request was returned without action and the United States retained possession of his property until he could prove his title in U.S. Court. Strachan and his family returned to their property in 1866 and he spent the rest of his life there.

Tradition holds that rock from the bluffs at Point of Rocks was later sold by the Strachan family to construct a wall around the City Point National Cemetery. A monument located there lists the doctors that served the Union Army at Point of Rocks.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

**Point of Rocks
Chesterfield County, VA**

Bibliography

Chesterfield County Historic Sites and Structures, Jeffrey M. O'Dell

"Civil War Activity at Point of Rocks Park" in *History and Archaeology at The Point of Rocks Park Chesterfield County, Virginia*. Leslie D. Jensen, 1979.

"History of Point of Rocks," Evelyn L. Cox, 1974

Old Virginia Homes Along the James, Emmie Ferguson Farrar

War of the Rebellion, The Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies. Washington: Government Printing Office.

Verbal Boundary Description

The property being nominated is identified as tax parcel 820641972500000 on the tax parcel maps for Chesterfield County, Virginia.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries for Point of Rocks includes the historic house and its historic setting near the natural rock bluff above the river.

Section _Photo List_ Page _8_

The following information is the same for all photographs:

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

**Point of Rocks
Chesterfield County, VA**

Property: Point of Rocks
Location: Chesterfield County, Virginia
Photographer: Carol Moore
Date of Photographs: September 2004
Negative Number:
Negatives stored: Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, Virginia

Photo 1 of 11
View: Front (west façade) of house

Photo 2 of 11
View: North side of house

Photo 3 of 11
View: South side of house

Photo 4 of 11
View: East side of house (showing kitchen addition)

Photo 5 of 11
View: Detail of front porch

Photo 6 of 11
View: Front entrance

Photo 7 of 11
View: Garage

Photo 8 of 11
View: Bedroom showing plain mantel and wide baseboard trim

Photo 9 of 11
View: Living room showing plain mantel, wide door opening and wide baseboard trim

Photo 10 of 11
View: Plain mantel in secondary room

Photo 11 of 11
View: Detail of living room and double-leaf door opening